



# TRICARE HELP E-MAIL SERVICE (THEMS)

## NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2002

Volume 1, Issue 8

TRICARE\_help@amedd.army.mil

“Helping to Understand”



### TRICARE Help Newsletter

This newsletter is a publication of the TRICARE Help E-mail Service, operated by the US Army Medical Command in San Antonio, Texas.

### THEMS

#### What is THEMS?

THEMS is a free e-mail service that provides quick answers to TRICARE questions. Clinical issues should be referred to your primary care provider. The e-mail address is: TRICARE\_help@amedd.army.mil.



Click here to send your TRICARE questions, concerns, or comments.

#### DEFENSE ENROLLMENT ELIGIBILITY REPORTING SYSTEM (DEERS)

The most important thing beneficiaries can do to ensure they have access to

their medical benefits is to keep information in their DEERS record up-to-date. DEERS is the computerized listing of all military sponsors, families, and others who, by law, are entitled to TRICARE benefits. Active duty and retired members are automatically listed, but they are responsible for listing their dependents and reporting any changes through the nearest military personnel office or ID card section. Newborns should be enrolled as soon as possible after birth. Sponsors or registered family members may make address changes; however, only the sponsor can add or delete a family member from DEERS. Proper documents are required, such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree, birth certificate, etc. Unmarried children over age 21 and attending an approved institution of higher learning on a full-time basis, need their student status entered into DEERS so that TRICARE eligibility is continued.

They will remain TRICARE eligible up to age 23, as long as they attend school on a full-time basis. Also in certain cases unmarried severely disabled children over 21 continue their TRICARE eligibility.

To receive care at a military treatment facility or from an authorized TRICARE civilian provider, sponsors and family members must be eligible and registered in DEERS. If the sponsor is registered in DEERS but the family is not, or the family has not verified eligibility within the last 4 years (normally in conjunction with ID card renewal), family members are ineligible for TRICARE health and pharmacy benefits.

Sponsors who keep DEERS up-to-date with current addresses, telephone numbers, and the status of all personal events--marriages, divorces, deaths, births, re-enlistments, retirements, etc.--eliminate access problems for

themselves and family members. Keeping DEERS information current helps ensure that any claims filed for the sponsor or family member are processed quickly and accurately. Claims for health care may be denied because the DEERS file shows no record of a new spouse or a child. Keeping DEERS current also ensures that important TRICARE-related health care documents--enrollment cards, brochures, privacy notices, etc., and, in some cases, prescription medications--are delivered to the sponsor and their family members at the correct address and on time.

The military sponsor is responsible for disenrolling his or her family members from DEERS when they are no longer eligible for TRICARE (because of the marriage of a minor child, divorce of a spouse who is not eligible for continued TRICARE benefits, enlistment of a child in the military, etc.). TRICARE contractors check DEERS before processing claims to make sure patients are eligible for TRICARE benefits. A claim may be paid in error because there was no record in DEERS of a divorce, death, or dropping/declining Medicare Part B. For

claims paid by mistake, the government is required by law to retrieve the money from the person to whom it was incorrectly paid--regardless of who was responsible for the mistake. Improperly receiving care may also be considered fraud.

Sometimes when sponsors change their status--active to retired, enlisted to officer or active to Reserve--breaks in coverage or "underlaps" in eligibility may occur, creating DEERS eligibility problems for sponsors and family members. Eligibility problems may occur anytime there is a delay updating the sponsor's new eligibility status in DEERS. To eliminate service breaks and periods of ineligibility for TRICARE benefits, sponsors should check their DEERS eligibility status periodically to ensure personal and family members' information is accurate and up-to-date.

Address changes to DEERS may be made by one of the following methods. (Include the sponsor's name and social security number, the address change, names of other family members affected by the address change, effective date of new address, and telephone number with the area code.)

-E-Mail to <mailto:addrinfo@osd.pentagon.mil>.

-Fax to DEERS at 1-831-655-8317.

-Mail to DSO, ATTN: COA, 400 Gigling Road, Seaside, CA 93955-6771.

-Go on-line at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/DEERSAddress/>

-Call the DEERS Service Office (DSO) at 1-800-538-9552.

-Nearest uniformed service personnel office. To locate the nearest military ID card facility, go to <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/>

If there is a problem with a DEERS record that cannot be resolved by the local ID card issuing office, call the DEERS Beneficiary Telephone Center at 1-800-538-9552.

REMEMBER: TRICARE does not make DEERS entries--the local military installation ID Card Office makes changes and updates.